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ABSTRACT

This address, based on 10 years of clinical and research experience with immigrant children and their families, discusses the fundamental information that both clinicians and researchers interested in the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls should consider. The various stresses of immigration are detailed, as are the factors that may significantly attenuate the response to the transitions and stress of immigration. Recent research efforts involve collecting data from a variety of sources including structured interviews of immigrant children and adolescents, their teachers and parents; ethnographic fieldwork in the schools and neighborhoods; psychological measures; and school records and achievement tests. While each of these data sets provide important information on their own, it is maintained that by combining the data and exploring points of convergence and points of divergence, it is possible to address more systematically and more thoroughly the changing experiences of immigrant youth. The model advocated attempts to capture the complexities of changing adaptations by connecting data. The objective is to generate high quality data to develop theoretically robust models, and to delineate how different players involved in the lives of immigrant children come to view their adaptations. (Contains 72 references.) (GCP)

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Conceptual Considerations in Our Understanding of Immigrant Adolescent Girls

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Introduction

Currently, in the United States, one out of every five children is the child of an immigrant. Children of immigrants are the fastest growing sector of the child population[1]. In New York City schools today, forty-eight percent of all students come from immigrant homes. In California, over 1.5 million children are classified as limited English proficient. While this concentration is particularly intense in large urban centers, in places like Dodge City Kansas, more than a third of their public school enrollment consists of children immigrants. Even in Kansas it would seem that, "we are not in Kansas anymore." Given the numbers involved, it is crucial that we develop a deeper understanding of the realities immigrant youth face as well as how they are adapting as they will play a key role in the reshaping of our society.

In terms of basic research on the topic of immigration, psychologists lag far behind economists, sociologists, and demographers. There is a splattering of clinical writings on the impact of immigration on individuals and families. [2] While these are important contributions to our understanding, such research is typically limited in terms of generalizability. Most of the research that does exist has emphasized the adult immigrant experience. Given the numbers of children involved, surprisingly little research has focused on the experiences of children.[3] We know very little about the impact of immigration on children, nor do we know enough about their long term adaptation.

Just as the research on immigration has emphasized the experiences of adults, the lens has been focused largely on men. Although there are more immigrant women than men,[4] we still know little about the gendered experiences of immigrants. After years of neglect, recently the specific issues facing immigrant women have begun to gain attention.[5] Knowledge about immigrant girls and more specifically immigrant adolescent girls remains sketchy.

Today, I share with you what I consider to be fundamental information that both clinicians and researchers interested in the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls should keep in mind. This discussion is based on 10 years of clinical and research experience with immigrant children and their families. I will also refer to studies on immigrant children from several disciplines as well as some initial

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findings from our current longitudinal study of 400 nine to fourteen year old immigrant children coming from the Central America, China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico, that I am conducting with anthropologist Marcelo Suárez-Orozco.

To paraphrase anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn, immigrant girls (and indeed boys) are like all other immigrant children, like some other immigrant children and like no other immigrant children. Therefore, I begin by outlining issues pertaining to children of immigrants in general and will then turn more specifically to examine issues pertaining to immigrant adolescent girls. In discussing the children of immigrants I will be referring to both the first generation (that is children who are born abroad) as well as the second generation (children born in the US of foreign born parents). I will close by reflecting upon basic themes to consider in future research.

The New Immigrants

This is a nation whose founding narrative is based on immigration. Across the centuries, there have been both steady streams as well as periodic waves of immigrants. What is different about the current immigration—a wave which began in 1965—is its remarkable diversity. The new immigrants come from highly diverse socio-economic and skill backgrounds—some are amongst the most educated folk in our population, thriving in the high-tech knowledge intense industries while others have very little education and are therefore entering the service industry with little prospect for advancement.

The new immigrants bring with them remarkable diversity in terms of culture and languages. In New York Public Schools over 100 different languages are spoken by students and in Los Angeles, schools are contending with over 90 languages. Even in smaller districts, it is not uncommon to have children speaking 30 different languages entering the school system.

The new immigrants are also diverse in terms of their racial and ethnic backgrounds. Over 70 percent of today's immigrants are people of color—coming from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia. The new immigrants are contributing significantly to our increasingly diverse society. Yet the models developed over the past few decades to explain the immigrant experience in American society have largely been based on the European experience. In a society that, both historically and in the present, has not easily handled race relations, this diversity may well factor into a somewhat different pathway of immigrant insertion in American society.

The Stresses of Immigration

Immigrants come for a variety of reasons—some come to thrive, others to survive. For many, migration results in substantial gains. Some escape persecution and long-separated families may be reunited. Some achieve significant social mobility while others experience adventure. Whatever the motives, immigration is considered worthwhile by many. Still, the gains of immigration come at considerable costs.

The pressures of migration are profoundly felt by the children of immigrants. These children experience a particular constellation of changes and experiences that are likely to have an impact upon their developing psyches. The stresses of immigration are complicated by both the structural barriers and a social ethos of intolerance and racism that many immigrant children of color encounter.

By any measure, immigration is one of the most stressful events a person can undergo. Immigration removes individuals from many of their relationships and predictable contexts—extended families and friends, community ties, jobs, living situations, customs and (often) language. Immigrants are stripped of many of their sustaining social relationships, as well as of the social roles that provide them with culturally scripted notions of how they fit into the world. Without a sense of competence, control, and belonging, they may feel marginalized. These changes are highly disorienting and nearly inevitably lead to a keen sense of loss.[6]

On the most dramatic end of the stress spectrum are the stresses that result in post-traumatic symptomatology. Refugees who have feared for their lives and may have been raped, or tortured or witnessed killings often experience transient as well as long-term Post Traumatic Stress symptomatology.[7] which include recurrent traumatic memories, a general numbing of responses, as well as a persistent sense of increased arousal leading to intense anxiety, irritability, and outbursts of anger, difficulty concentrating and insomnia. [8] The actual border crossing is also often a traumatic event for adults and children alike. In addition to the violence that may have been experienced prior to or during migration, all too many immigrant children witness a disconcertingly high level of violence in their new neighborhood and school settings. In our sample, concerns with school and neighborhood violence was all too frequently noted by many of our participants.

In many cases, children are separated from their parents for long periods of time as a result of migration, an occurrence that is experienced by many children as painful. Parents often go ahead, leaving children with relatives as they forge the pathways in the new country. At other times, the child comes with

one parent, leaving the other behind in the homeland. In our sample of 400 participants, fully 80% of the children had been separated from one or both parents for periods of several months to several years. During this time, the child is likely to attach herself to a new caretaker, who may or may not affectionately attend to her needs. If the child succeeds in attaching to the new caretaker, the separation from this caretaker in order to be reunited with the parent can be quite painful (compounding the mourning and loss that follows the immigration). If the separation from the parent was painful and the child was neglected or [illegible] during the separation, this too will complicate the adjustment following migration. In any case, [illegible]ely to be some fall-out following these years of separation prior to migration.

A form of stress specific to immigration has been termed acculturation stress.[9] This is the process whereby individuals learn and come to terms with the new cultural 'rules of engagement.' The individual's place of origin provides her with familiar and predictable contexts; these predictable contexts change in dramatic ways following immigration. As Polish immigrant Eva Hoffmann says in her exquisitely written memoirs, immigration, results in falling "out of the net of meaning into the weightlessness of chaos." [10] Without a sense of competence, control, and belonging, migrants are often left with a sense of loss, disorientation, and marginality. An informant insightfully summed up the experience: "I became an infant again. I had to learn all over again to eat, to speak, to dress, and what was expected of me."

In anticipation of the migration and in the initial period following the arrival, many immigrants experience a sense of euphoria.[11] Expectations are often high as the anticipated possibilities may seem boundless. The parents 'energies are focused on attending to the immediate needs of orienting themselves to the new environment, including finding work and a place to live. As the realities of the new situation are confronted, they normatively begin to experience a variety of psychological problems.[12] Most frequently, the cumulative losses of loved ones and familiar contexts lead to feelings along a spectrum of sadness to depression to "perpetual mourning."[13] The dissonances in cultural expectations and of predictable contexts lead many to experience an anxious disorientation.[14] Disappointed aspirations and dreams, when coupled with a hostile reception in the new environment, may lead to feelings of distrust, suspicion, anger, and even well-founded paranoia.[15]

The repercussions of the responses at the individual level are felt within the family. Sluzki has argued that migration has destabilizing effects on the family. Indeed, migration creates particular pressures on the family system.[16] Migration creates changes within the structure of the family— former family leaders may be "demoted" and the nature of culturally scipted gender relationships may shift.[17] In families where immigrant women move into the formal workplace, their new role as family providers may at once provide

them with independence and create tensions within their relationships. Some immigrant families become entrenched in traditional gender roles in an effort to ward off acculturation .[18] It is not unusual for there to be an increase in conflict between family members following migration.

Many immigrant families incorporate extended family members and are more interdependent and hierarchical than traditional Anglo-American families.[19] Some of these characteristics are in part culturally determined but others may be secondary to migration. Extended families will often live together to share both the financial and the childcare burdens. In absence of other social support networks, they may rely on each other considerably more than most non-immigrant families.

Immigrant parents often have to make dramatic sacrifices for what they hope will be a better future for their children. They are frequently fiercely protective of their children with deep-seeded concerns about the perceived dangers of the new environment (including the potential of becoming too Americanized). Within the new context, they may set limits that are significantly more stringent than they would have had they stayed in their country of origin.

At the same time, immigrant parents are often quite dependent upon their children. The children may develop language skills more quickly than their parents and consequently serve as interpreters and errand-runners for the family. Alternating between "parentifying" the children and, at the same time, severely constricting their activities and contacts, may create significant tension within the family.

Many immigrant parents work in several jobs. These multiple obligations lead them to be relatively unavailable to their children. This physical absence compounds the psychological unavailability that often accompanies parental anxiety and depression.[20] These two forms of absence, all too frequently leave immigrant children to their own devices long before it is developmentally appropriate. While in some cases this leads to hyper-responsible internalized children, in other cases it leads to depressed kids who are drawn to the lure of alternative family structures such as gangs.[21]

The time-frame for adaptation to the new culture is usually quite different for children than for adults. Schools are the first sites of extended cultural contact between immigrant children and members of the new society. In that setting, they are forced to contend more quickly and more intensely with the new culture than do their parents who may work in jobs that do not require much in the way of language skills and are where their co-workers are largely other members of the immigrant community.[22] The relative rapidness of the children's adaptation may create particular tensions. Parents may try to slow down the process by warning children not to act like other children in the new setting. Children may also have

feelings ranging from vague to intense embarrassment to fierce protectiveness in regards to aspects of their parents' "old country" and "old fashioned" ways.

In immigrant families, the potential for miscommunication should not be overlooked or underestimated. The children often learn the new language more quickly than do their parents. Most children long to be like others in their new home; many will quickly show a preference for the language of the dominant culture.[23] Furthermore, even if the child continues to speak the home language, research suggests that the level of fluency is likely to atrophy over time.[24] Hence, while the child may easily communicate about basic needs in her language of origin, she is likely to have more difficulty communicating subtleties of thought and emotion in that language. By the same token, often the opposite is true with the parents. Hence, one of the parties in the conversation is likely to be at a disadvantage in complicated communication sequences. Furthermore, in complex discussions, subtleties of meanings are likely to be missed and miscommunication may result. It is not uncommon to overhear discussions in which parents and children switch back and forth between languages and completely miss one another's intent.

A number of factors may significantly attenuate the response to the transitions and stress of immigration.[25] These mediating variables can roughly be broken down into two categories: sending factors and receiving factors.

The Sending Context

Each individual brings with him characteristics, traits, and experiences which are referred to as sending (or antecedent) factors. The circumstances surrounding the migration can play a key role. If the immigrant is lured out of her homeland by the promise of opportunity and adventure, she is likely to be more positively disposed to the experience than if she is 'pushed' out by ethnic, religious, or political conflict, chronic hardship, or famine in the homeland. By the same token, at least initially, the individual initiating the migration is likely to be more enthusiastic about the experience than a reluctant spouse, elderly parent, or child (Shuval 1980). Children and adolescents often do not share their parents' motivation to migrate. As a result, they may not pass through a stage of looking forward in anticipation to the migration and may experience the move an imposition upon them from which they have little to gain.

Socio-economic background has been found to be a mediator of the stresses of the migration[26] process. [27] A variety of other sending factors can also help to mediate the migration process. Possessing the language skills of the new country, clearly is an asset. Religiosity and connection with a church may

also play a positive role. The rural to urban shift (a not uncommon pattern for many immigrants) on the other hand may complicate the transition. While rural children often have had considerable freedom to play and roam their neighborhoods in their place of origin, they often lose such freedoms when moving to an urban environment.

Personality and temperament are likely to play a significant role in how the individual will respond to the migration process. [28] A healthy response to dramatic change requires the ability to be flexible and adaptable to new circumstances. Individuals who are particularly rigid, or who have a high need for predictability, are likely to suffer more than those who are more comfortable with change and new circumstances.[29] Those who are particularly shy, proud, or sensitive to outside opinions are also at higher risk as are those who are highly suspicious of the motivations of others. Furthermore, if there is a preexisting psychiatric disorder, this is likely to exacerbate the response to migration. An effective arsenal of coping strategies, on the other hand, is a great asset[30] for adults and children alike.

The Ethos of Reception

Conditions in the new host milieu also play a significant role. A well-functioning social support network,[31] quite predictably, is closely linked to better adjustment to the new environment. Interpersonal relationships provide a number of functions[32] including: the provision of tangible aid (such as running an errand or making a loan); as well as guidance and advice (including information, job and housing leads). Social companionship also serves to maintain and enhance self-esteem and provides much needed acceptance and approval.

Whether or not the immigrant is "documented" or "undocumented" will also obviously impact the opportunity structure in which she is able to participate as well as the general quality of life.[33] Feeling "hunted" by agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service is highly stressful [34] and leads to anxiety and (well-founded) paranoia. Furthermore, it will impact the kind of work available.

Questions of availability of work, as well as pay and safety on the job play a role in adjustment of immigrant parents (and by extension their children). Today's hourglass economy provides ample jobs at both the high and low ends. Highly skilled immigrants are heavily recruited by the high tech industry. Jobs at the low end of the spectrum, though readily available, offer little in the way of advancement opportunities

for parents. For their children who do not finish high school, they will be effectively locked out of anything other than dead-end service sector jobs.[35]

For children, the quality of their schools will be important in the ease of transition. Recent research by Gary Orfield at Harvard demonstrates that many immigrant children find themselves in segregated, poverty- stricken, and conflict-ridden schools.[36] Obviously, neighborhood safety will do much to influence the quality of life for children and adults alike. Many immigrants move to inner-city areas in search of housing they can afford. "Affordable" urban housing is often located in areas, which may be characterized as "war zones." Our research suggests that fear of violence is a central concern in the lives of many new immigrant children. Parents, too, fear for their children's safety. Parents often require children to stay within the confines of their (often cramped) living spaces, out of harm's way in the streets. Many of our informants lamented the resulting loss of freedom following immigration.

The general social climate or ethos of reception plays a critical role in their adaptation. Discrimination against immigrants of color is widespread.[37] Prejudice and exclusion are established forms of social trauma. The exclusion can take a structural form (when individuals are excluded from the opportunity structure) as well as an "attitudinal" form (in the form of disparagement and public hostility).

In recent years, widespread concern about the influx of new immigrants has led to several dramatic anti-immigrant initiatives designed to prevent immigrants (largely undocumented but also documented) from receiving benefits or public services.[38] Immigration controls over the years have moved from the border, to the welfare agencies,[39] to the hospital[40] and to the schoolhouse.[41] These practices generate a pattern of intense exclusion and segregation between many immigrants and the larger society. This segregation is evident in the work force,[42] schools,[43] and residential patterns.[44] Increasing segmentation in the US economy further intensifies these patterns of deep segregation.[45] Furthermore, while immigrant youth have made gains in terms of level of completed education, those gains are not being rewarded proportionally in terms of wages of earnings.[46]

While the structural exclusion suffered by immigrants and their children is detrimental to their ability to participate in the opportunity structure, the attitudinal social exclusion also plays a toxic role. How does a child incorporate the notion that she is "an alien," " an illegal," unwanted and not warranting the most basic rights of education and health care?

Fear of the cultural dilution of the country's Anglo-Saxon institutions and values is an enduring preoccupation feeding the anti-immigrant ethos.[47] Immigrants who do not speak English and who "look"

different from the dominant Anglo-European majority make many non-immigrants uncomfortable. At best they are viewed as unwelcome competitors and at worst they are seen as sinister. Negative attributes are projected onto them as they become the target of what cultural psychologist George DeVos terms 'psychological disparagement.'[48] They become the objects of symbolic violence that stereotypes them as innately inferior (lazier, prone to crime, and so forth). They are thought to be less deserving of sharing in the society's dream and their lot in life is thus justified.

Many immigrant and minority children receive 'social mirroring' that is predominantly hostile.[49] When the assumptions about them include expectations of sloth, irresponsibility, low intelligence, and even danger, the outcome can be toxic. When these reflections are received in a number of mirrors including the media, the classroom, and the street, the outcome is devastating.[50] Our own recent research suggests that immigrant children are keenly aware of the prevailing ethos of hostility of the dominant culture.[51] Psychologically, what do children do with this reception? Are the attitudes of the host culture internalized, denied, or resisted? The most positive possible outcome is to be goaded into "I'll show you. I'll make it in spite of what you think of me." This response, while theoretically possible is relatively infrequent. More likely, the child responds with self-doubt and shame, setting low aspirations in a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy: "They are probably right. I'll never be able to do it." Yet another potential response is one of "You think I'm bad. Let me show you how bad I can be."

A number of theoretical constructs have been developed over the years to explore the immigration experience in American society. Historically, models developed to examine immigration were largely based on the European experience. These studies described patterns of assimilation following various paths on what was depicted as a generally upwardly mobile journey.[52] The argument was quite simple: the longer immigrants were in the United States the better they did.

Today, the pattern of adaptation is more complex. In broad strokes, several studies on the performance of immigrant children in schools have pointed to a trimodal pattern of school adaptation (a critical predictor of success in this society). Some immigrant children do extraordinarily well in school surpassing native-born children in terms of a number of indicators—including grades, performance on standardized tests, and attitudes towards education.[53] Other immigrants tend to overlap with native-born children.[54] Yet other immigrants tend to achieve well below their native-born peers.[55]

In addition to this pattern of variability in overall performance between groups, another disconcerting pattern had consistently emerged from the data from a variety of social science disciplines

using a variety of methodologies. For many immigrant groups, length of residency in the United States is associated with declining health, school achievement, and aspirations.[56]

A recent large scale National Research Council's study considered a variety of measures of physical health and risk behaviors among children and adolescents from immigrant families—including general health, learning disabilities, obesity, emotional difficulties, and various risk-taking behaviors. The NRC researchers found that immigrant youth were healthier than their counterparts from non-immigrant families. The researchers pointed out that these finding are "counterintuitive" in light of the racial or ethnic minority status, overall lower socio-economic status, and higher poverty rates that characterize many immigrant children and families that they studied. They also found that the longer youth were in the United States, the poorer their overall psychological health and the more likely they were to engage in risky behaviors such as substance abuse, violence, and delinquency.[57] It should be noted that a study of a similar nature with nearly identical findings was released in Canada late last year.[58]

In the area of education, Rumbaut and Portes[59] surveyed more than 15,000 high school students in California and Florida. They found a *negative* association with length of residence in the US with both GPA and aspirations. The longer the children of immigrants were in the US, the less well they did in school. Steinberg and his colleagues, in their study conducted in high schools across the country, also found a pattern of decline associated with "Americanization."[60]

We do know that immigrant children come in with positive attitudes towards their new homes and schools.[61] In our current study, 98 percent of the participants agreed with the statement: "School is important to get ahead." In a more open-ended question inquiring about what the children's favorite thing about life in the U.S., 44 percent spontaneously mentioned school. In the Sentence Completion task: "In life the most important thing is . . :" 47 percent responded with school. To the Sentence "School is. . . ." 72 percent revealed positive associations (with such responses as "my life," "my other family," "the pathway to success"). Their incoming attitudes are remarkably positive but the verdict is still out regarding what will happen over time.

Immigrant Adolescent Girls

I have just reviewed some key issues relevant to the experiences of immigrant children and their families. I will turn now to a consideration of what we know more specifically about the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls.

The data on the mental health and risk behavior practices on immigrant girls is sketchy. There has been no comprehensive study of immigrant girls per se though there are some addressing issues of particular groups such as Latina girls or Filipina girls. Some ethnographic,[62] clinical, and survey data suggest greater depression, low self-esteem, and more suicidality amongst female children of immigrants.[63]

A number of studies report that substance abuse is substantially lower in Hispanic girls than it is in Hispanic boys. Other studies suggest that Hispanic boys and girls born abroad are less likely to abuse substances than their native born counterparts.[64]

Rogler, Cortes, and Malgady reviewed the literature and considered the relationship between acculturation and mental health amongst Latinos.[65] They considered three hypotheses: the "negative relationship hypothesis" (which postulated that less acculturated individuals would be at greater risk because of loss of relationships, and economic, and social stresses); the "positive relationship hypothesis" (which predicted that greater acculturation would lead to greater risks of depression because of the exposure to toxic mainstream attitudes and potential internalization leading to low self-esteem) and the "curvilinear" hypothesis (which predicted that risk is greatest at the high and low ends of the spectrum.) They found no consistent support of any of the three hypotheses nor did they establish gender differences. They too noted that the first generation was somewhat hardier, while the second generation was at greater risk. This conclusion is consistent with the National Research Study I reported earlier. Greater mental health issues & risk behaviors are found with the second generation than the first. I should add here that the NRC study did not systematically address differences between girls & boys.

A number of studies have reported gender differences in responsibilities at home. Immigrant girls have far more responsibilities at home than do their brothers.[66] Their roles include translating, advocating in financial, medical, legal transactions, and acting as surrogate parents. Abel Valenzuela found that eldest children in particular were expected to assist with such tasks as babysitting, feeding younger siblings, getting siblings ready for school in the morning and escorting them to school.

Other studies have noted significant family tensions around dating.[67] Olivia Espin points out, that in some immigrant communities, becoming "Americanized" is synonymous with being sexually promiscuous. As a result, immigrant adolescent girls activities outside the home are heavily monitored and controlled. While boys may be encouraged to venture forth into the new world, girls and women are more likely to be kept close to the family hearth. Espin notes that because girls tend to more highly value social and family ties , they may be more reluctant to struggle to separate from the family.[68] However, adolescent

girls often experience the burden of being torn between the pursuit of romantic love and the role of dutiful daughter.[69]

As a result of the concerns around dating and the heavy family responsibilities at home, the activities of immigrant girls outside the home are often heavily restricted. These restrictions are often experienced by adolescent girls as "unfair" and "oppressive" and may be the focus of family conflict. However, Rob Smith and his team at Columbia note that these cultural models may translate into practices with unanticipated side-effects (and even benefits). First, they may be exposed to less toxic circumstances such as violence or gang related activities. Indeed, several researchers have found that girls are less likely to be involved in gangs and when they are, their involvement is more symbolic and less intense.[70] They are more likely to remain in school and more easily transition out of the gang phase moving relatively smoothly into the labor market. [71]

Since the beginning of this century, amongst most ethnic groups, immigrant girls completed more years of school than have their male counterparts.[72] Amongst Asian Americans, an analysis of census data found that for the children of immigrants, females reach higher levels of educational attainment than to boys.[73] In a study of Afro-Caribbeans in New York, Mary Waters also found that girls are more likely to complete school.[74]

Educational anthropologist Margaret Gibson notes that: "there is mounting evidence that among some groups, ethnic girls tend to remain in school longer and receive higher grades than boys, while in others, their performance lags behind that of their brothers."[75] This overall pattern is true in the United States as well as in much of Europe. Religion and culture have a tremendous influence on the experiences of immigrant girls. Issue facing girls of Hindi Indian or Muslim Afghani backgrounds are quite different from those of a Catholic Mexicans which are still different from those facing Buddhist Chinese. Arranged marriages are normative in some cultures—for a girl raised in a post-industrial society seeped in media images of what life should be like in the new society, this pathway will be much more conflicted than if she were being raised in her country of origin.[76] In cultures where parents discourage their daughters from remaining in school past marriageable age (which in some cultures in the mid teens), educational pursuits for girls will be truncated.

How can we account for girls more successful educational trajectories? It is likely to be multiply determined. Since immigrant girls are more restricted by their parents than boys. "time at school then becomes a precious social experience."[77] They tend to experience their days in school as times of relative freedom in contrast to mainstream American teenagers that tend to talk about their time in school as a

"prison experience."[78] They may feel more positive about their schooling experiences and therefore be more engaged.

Moving away from "cultural models" at home to the social context of reception, the anthropological evidence is quite clear. As John Ogbu and George DeVos, have noted, for youth coming from backgrounds which historically have been and continue to be depreciated and disparaged, academic engagement is threatened for boys and girls alike. However, for boys from these groups, their performance in school is (on the whole) still more at risk. This is true, for example, for Afro-Carribean youth in Britain, Canada, and in the US, for North African males in Belgium, and for Moroccan and Algerian boys in France.

We can formulate a number of hypotheses do account for this. As noted earlier, parents may exert less control on their son's behaviors than on their daughters. Tony Earls[79] has persuasively demonstrated the significant role family and community control play on the wellbeing of youth. Furthermore, the teacher expectations minority boys encounter are quite different than those held for girls. Adolescent minority boys are often perceived by teachers and administrators to be threatening. Another contribution to boys poorer schooling performance may be the finding reported by many that the peer pressure for boys to reject school is quite strong.[80] Behaviors that gain respect with their peers often bring them in conflict with their teachers.

Girls are also more likely to have specific career goals and plans than do boys. [81] Smith notes that girls often have also developed "soft-skills" that make them more easily employable. Because girls are more likely to have helped their mothers as translators and in negotiating social institutions, they develop such skills as translation, advocacy, and explaining. It is no accident that they are more likely to enter the work force as youth counselors, medical assistants, daycare workers, case workers and in other social service related positions[82]

Lastly, let us turn to the quintessential task of adolescents—that of defining oneself vis-à-vis the society at large. The children of immigrants must construct identities that will, if successful, enable them to thrive in incommensurable social settings such as home, schools, the world of peers, and the world of work.

Erickson[83] argued that for optimal development, there needs to be a certain amount of complimentarity between the individual's sense of self and the varied social milieus she must transverse. Immigrant children, however, must move across discontinuous social spaces. Immigrant children today may have their breakfast conversation in Farsi, listen to African American rap with their peers on the way to school, and learn in mainstream English about the New Deal from their social studies teacher. Therefore,

the experience of the children of immigrants offers us a particularly powerful lens through which to view the workings of identity.

Immigrant adolescents face particular challenges in their identity formation.[84] When there is too much cultural dissonance, when the cultural guides are inadequate, and when the social mirror reflects back negative images, adolescents will find it difficult to develop a flexible and adaptive sense of self. Many are torn between the attachment to the parental culture of origin, the lure of the often more intriguing adolescent peer culture, and aspirations to join the American mainstream culture (which may or may not welcome them).

Studies suggest that immigrant girls seem to have less pressure to make choices about their ethnic identity.[85] Boys feel more strongly pressured by peers to take on an ethnic or racial identity . Furthermore, identities and negative expectations are less likely to be imposed upon them by the dominant society. Immigrant boys of color in particular are more likely to perceive that they are unwelcome by mainstream society. Perhaps as a result, girls tend to perceive more future opportunities than do immigrant boys of color.

There seems to be some consensus that the boundaries between the identities appeared to be "more fluid and permeable" for girls than for boys. Girls seem to be more easily able to assume bicultural competencies and make successful bicultural adjustments.[86] In our theoretical work, we have postulated that such bicultural strategies are critical to individual's wellbeing and future outcomes.[87]

Conclusion

In the end, we are left with a sense that we know much more about what we don't know then we actually know. This is in part because of the shear magnitude of the phenomena under consideration as well as the methodological challenges we face in this area of inquiry.

Large-scale surveys of immigrant populations are useful in outlining the contours of the phenomenon in broad strokes; nuances, however, are lost. On the other hand, while small-scale studies based on interview, clinical or ethnographic data, can provide rich insight, they face the eternal problems of limited sampling, and generalizability. Studies of a specific group can shed only limited light upon the generic experience of immigration. Research based on standardized psychological tests is typically culture and language bound. Beyond culturally insensitive items, standardized psychological testing and structured interviewing are cultural practices simply foreign to many immigrant populations.

I would advocate that no single disciplinary approach can do justice to the complexities involved in immigrant uprooting and resettlement. After years of basic research in this field, we have concluded that our best hope for gaining a meaningful understanding of this complex issue is through comparative, interdisciplinary and longitudinal work.

Our recent research efforts involve collecting data from a variety of sources including structured interviews of immigrant children and adolescents, their teachers, and parents; ethnographic fieldwork in the schools and neighborhoods; psychological measures; school records, and achievement tests. While each of these data sets provide important information on their own, our position is that by combining the data and exploring points of convergence and points of divergence, we are able to address more systematically and more thoroughly the changing experiences of immigrant youth.

The model we advocate attempts to capture the complexities of changing adaptations by triangulating data. A primary motivation for gathering data from several vantage points is based on our experience that there are specific methodological issues working with immigrant populations. For example, we have discovered that while many children display a tendency to produce socially desirable responses, among immigrant children this may indeed be intensified. Because they are newcomers, outsiders to the mainstream, and sometimes undocumented, immigrant children (and their parents) are often more reluctant to be fully open and revealing in a structured interview. Furthermore, in working with immigrant populations, powerful cultural models of what can be asked directly (such as personal questions about the discipline of children, finances, or other family matters) limit the accuracy of the responses that can be gathered from such measures.

In addition, we have found that there is an important disconnect between what immigrant youth say and what they actually do. We have discovered that relying solely on structured interview and questionnaire data tends to present a somewhat unrealistic picture of their attitudes and behaviors. For example, while immigrant children nearly universally respond that schooling is one of the most important parts of their lives, our ethnographic observations have revealed that not all children behave accordingly. In fact, we found a wide range of behavioral strategies in the children's engagements with schooling tasks. In examining the schooling experiences of an immigrant girl (for example), we deploy data collected from our own observations of her classroom engagement, psychological data on her attitudes and expectations, her teacher's perspectives on her behaviors and progress, her parents' view, as well as what the school records and achievement tests reveal. This

allows us to develop a more accurate and nuanced portrait of the girls' attitudes, behaviors and outcomes.

The objective is to generate high quality data to be able develop theoretically robust models, and delineate how different players involved in the lives of immigrant children come to view their adaptations. What is the child's perspective? What is her parent's point of view? How do her peers come into the picture? How do teachers view the challenges of educating her? How are her experiences different from her brothers?

An understanding of experience based on such multiple points of view is critical for developing the types of programs and interventions needed to serve this growing and vibrant sector of our American fabric. As clinicians, educators, and as researchers it is important that we deepen our understanding of their circumstances. Their long-term adaptation will in large part determine what kind of country we will become.

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